



Web Chat with President Dynes

On March 30, 2004, UC President Robert C. Dynes held an hour-long web chat with employees at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. The following is a transcript of questions and answers from this chat.

For more information about President Dynes and future events, please visit the president's web page at <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/president/welcome.html>.

Moderator Welcome! UC President Robert C. Dynes will be answering questions from Livermore staff today. He will be joining us at 10 a.m., and he will answer as many questions as possible during the scheduled hour. You can post questions now if you like, and President Dynes will respond when he joins us at 10 a.m.

President Dynes has just joined us -- thank you, Bob, for being here.

Bob Dynes Hi, this is Bob Dynes. Thanks for joining me today; I'm looking forward to the conversation. I have the greatest respect for the Livermore Lab and all of the people at the lab who are responsible for its contributions to our nation. This is one chance -- and there will be others -- for me to hear what's on your minds. I hope you'll be patient with the format; because I do give some thought to my answers, there will be a delay between your questions being asked and my answer appearing. Also, we have just created a new UC web site with resources for employees of the national laboratories, and I hope you will take a look at it when you have a moment. The site is at **www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/labcontract**.

Moderator LLNL also has a web page devoted to the contract: **www-r.llnl.gov/contract**

<Q> How do you like being president so far? What do you think about UC's role at the labs and its value to national security?

Bob Dynes "Like" isn't the right word. I find this job enormously challenging and rewarding, and I am thrilled by the potential impact that the University of California has on the state and the nation. The University of California, in my opinion, has been a terrific contractor at the labs. The science and technology is incomparable. Of course, there have been some difficulties, and I don't want to dwell on those, but I do believe that the University of California has the intellectual horsepower and the correct set of values to serve the nation in this role.

<Q> What is the anticipated date for the Livermore contract bid? I have heard 2007 as the latest thinking among the ADs.

Bob Dynes We really don't know. The NNSA and the Secretary of Energy have left that to be determined. It could be as early as 2005 and as late as 2007. We don't have any more inside knowledge than that.

<Q> Will you be visiting [Los Alamos] LANL? We look forward to running with you.

Thanks for the question. I don't know the exact timing, but it's always a joy to visit LANL. For the last 25 years I've been LANL at least twice a year. I expect I'll be out there within the next six months. And I will run for sure -- I find the 7,000-foot elevation challenging, but it hasn't slowed me down yet! There are some magnificent trails.

<Q> What is the status of bringing in industrial partners to help UC to manage better?

Several of you have asked related questions on partnering. The message that we are receiving from the DOE and from Washington is very clear, and that is that we should be exploring potential partners. We are doing that, and it is far too early to come to any conclusions as to whether or who those partners might be. The University is considering industrial partners that would have strengths complementary to those of the University and who could operate in an integrated and seamless manner within laboratory management. That "integrated and seamless" obviously presents challenges in any partnership. A key principle in our partnering will be to maintain the University's values with respect to operation of the labs. We believe we can accomplish these objectives.

<Q> How will those of us currently in UCRS [UC Retirement System] be affected?

This is an important question, and one that I have received extensive employee communications on. I know that many of you value the UC-offered benefits as well as the labs' relationship to the University of California. So that you have a fuller understanding of the benefits issue, UC has developed a fact sheet on UCRP benefits for lab employees, and it can be found on the web at www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/labcontract/benefits.html. Without going into all the details that are addressed in that fact sheet, DOE has stated publicly that it intends to assure that historic benefits are retained and that future benefits be competitive.

<Q> How do you feel the overall UC community feels about running the labs? Newspapers tend to talk up the negative, but I wondered what your take was on it?

One of the many great things about the University of California is the diversity of opinions that our faculty and employees have on a wide variety of issues. This is certainly true in this case as well! I do not want to speak for the faculty on this issue, but the faculty takes the University's management of the national laboratories very seriously. The Academic Senate has formed the Academic Council Special Committee on the National Labs, which will provide input to me and to The Regents. The committee is developing a series of white papers to share with faculty via the web and will be holding a series of town halls at UC campuses to share information and discuss the issues. This will culminate in a systemwide poll of the faculty regarding the management of the labs, sometime in May. This poll will address a variety of questions related to our management.

Moderator A number of you have written in to ask about pension benefits and the contract competition's potential impact on them. Please see the fact sheet at www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/labcontract/benefitsfactsheet.pdf for more information.

<Q> What can be done about the "graying" of the LLNL work force?

Bob Dynes I'm concerned that a large fraction of the workforce is eligible for retirement and may retire over the next decade. The best way to deal with this is to continue the workforce planning that Mike Anastasio began when he became director. He and his team are encouraged to continue their efforts to reach out to identify and hire the very best people to replace those who will be departing from all parts of the laboratory.

<Q> In the event that UC were not selected to manage LANL, would the UC compete for the LLNL contract? In other words, would UC manage only one of the two weapons laboratories?

Bob Dynes Thanks for the question. While the final decision is a decision to be made by the Board of Regents, the University currently is preparing to compete for all three management contracts. In my own opinion, a loss of the Los Alamos contract -- which I certainly do not expect -- would not dissuade me from competing for the Livermore contract.

<Q> I heard through the "rumor mill" that the University's choice for partnering on the contract proposal is no longer involved. Can you please clarify the impacts on the University's bid process since this occurred? Thank you.

Bob Dynes I hope I answered that in response to another question earlier. We've not closed any options, and our progress is consistent with meeting the requirements of the bid process. Conversations are continuing.

<Q> How will continuing education and advanced degree support be handled by a non-UC corporation?

Bob Dynes That is a good question. This would be up to the non-UC operator.

<Q> First of all thank you for hosting this chat. As the process goes forward what do you see as the biggest hurdles that UC needs to overcome for a successful bid.

Bob Dynes Thanks for the question. The biggest hurdle I see is working through the nature of any partners and the form of that partnership. It's also difficult to prepare for this competition when we have not yet seen an RFP.

<Q> Based on today's UC capabilities, what are its chances of winning the contract?

Bob Dynes We are positioning ourselves to be stronger than any competition.

Moderator DOE has not yet issued the contract RFPs. When they are available, we will post them on the lab contract web site at www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/labcontract

<Q> President Dynes, Should we expect to see one or more of the labs managed by the UC in a series of short term contract extensions?

Bob Dynes I don't think so. The schedules for awarding the contracts for the Lawrence Berkeley lab and for the Los Alamos lab have been clearly laid out by the Secretary. I cannot speak for the DOE, but it looks to me as if there is enough time such that we can meet this schedule and a full contract can be awarded.

<Q> Will you describe your personal relationship with NNSA director Brooks?

Bob Dynes We have met several times. The meetings have been warm, frank, friendly, and direct.

<Q> With all the hassle that UC has endured over the past few years, what are the tangible benefits to UC for maintaining the LLNL and LANL contracts?

Bob Dynes You understand that I am a physicist who maintains a research laboratory -- so this answer will reflect that. First, I believe that primarily The Regents are committed to these contracts as a service to the nation. In addition, I see massive benefits in science and technology to the University of California through the collaborations, the agreements, the flow of people and ideas between the campuses and the laboratories.

<Q> What is the outlook for further tuition increases?

Bob Dynes I know this is a concern for those of you who are parents. Unfortunately, the answer is "very likely." The support for our educational mission comes from two sources: the state and student fees. Insofar as the state support continues to decrease, student fees will increase. The governor's budget has proposed a 10% increase for resident undergraduates and a 40% increase for graduate students. This of course is not the final budget, and I and several UC vice presidents are in continuous discussion on these issues with Sacramento.

<Q> When do we expect to know about the Livermore contract?

Bob Dynes We will know before the expiration of the current Livermore contract, which is Sept. 2005. There will either be a competition announced, or an extension.

<Q> In the "New Management Organization for Labs Unveiled," article appearing in the LLNL Newline, November 14, 2003, issue, it states that the University of California is establishing a Laboratory Management Council. Robert Van Ness (associate vice president for laboratory operations) says that, "the UC Laboratory Management Council will broaden our outreach and take advantage of the exceptional resources that are within the University of California." Furthermore, "the council will allow us to bring the expertise of the University of California's functional operations, including the offices of financial management and human resources and benefits to the management and oversight of the laboratories." In your view, how is the council meeting its charter thus far?

Bob Dynes The members of the Lab Management Council are involved on a regular basis with the key issues at the laboratories and have provided significant support to improving operations in a number of areas. We are seeing effective results at each of the laboratories.

<Q> How would the loss of the LLNL management contract impact UC graduate students that are working on their thesis research there?

Bob Dynes While I cannot speak for any new contractor, I would expect that the continuation of a UC graduate student's thesis would be in the best interest of the laboratories and of any contractor.

<Q> With regards to the contract...if UC does not continue to manage LLNL and LANL there is a strong possibility that we will lose many needed resources with regards to personnel. I'm sure DOE and UC are concerned about this, but can you give any

further details on how to avoid such a loss?

Bob Dynes I am certainly worried about this as well and have heard from many of the staff of their concerns about a crossover to a new contractor. The laboratories are scientifically very strong and serve the nation's defense and security needs. As a citizen, I would feel very uneasy about losing that strength.

<Q> As California residents, how can we help ensure adequate state funding for the UC system? I have heard several discussions on NPR of late about how the eroding state support threatens the University's position as the leader in higher public education.

Bob Dynes We continue to build support throughout the state for the University of California. Our friends from all sectors are expressing their views in Sacramento. In my visits there, I find that state representatives are being reminded continually of the value of the University of California to the future of the state.

I am working diligently on educating folks in Sacramento on the value of an investment in the University. For more information, I hope you'll take a look at **www.ucforcalifornia.org**.

Moderator We've reached the end of the hour. President Dynes, thank for being with us today for this chat.

Bob Dynes Thank you. It has been a pleasure, and we will keep in touch. Thanks again. -- Bob